

NFPA issues Emergency Evacuation Planning Guide for People with Disabilities

March 29, 2007 - A new [Emergency Evacuation Planning Guide for People with Disabilities](#) was developed and issued this month by the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA). The document provides general information to assist in identifying the needs of people with disabilities related to emergency evacuation planning.

According to the U.S Census Bureau, nearly 49 million Americans had one or more disabilities in 2000. The guide addresses the need for evacuation plans to include everyone, and highlights the needs, criteria, and minimum information required to incorporate appropriate planning strategies for people with disabilities into these plans.

“Other than preventing an emergency before it happens, having a plan and practicing it is the best way to prepare ourselves for the unexpected,” said James M. Shannon, NFPA’s president. “NFPA developed this guide as a resource for creating an all-inclusive evacuation plan that considers everyone’s needs for evacuation, including the needs of people with disabilities.”

The Emergency Evacuation Planning Guide for People with Disabilities is available for download at no cost from NFPA’s Web site, www.nfpa.org/evacuationguide.

The document is a valuable resource for people with disabilities as well as employers, building owners and managers, and others involved in developing emergency evacuation plans. Critical information on the operational, planning, and response elements necessary to develop a well-thought-out plan for evacuating a building or taking other appropriate action in the event of an emergency are covered.

Five general categories of disabilities covered in the guide include mobility impairments, visual impairments, hearing impairments, speech impairments, and cognitive impairments. Four elements of evacuation information needed by occupants are: notification, way finding, use of way, and assistance. Basically, in the event of an emergency, a person would need to be notified of the emergency; identify a way out; assess if they can get out on their own, with the help of a device, or with assistance; and identify and express if assistance is needed and what that would involve.

Materials include a personal emergency evacuation planning checklist that building services managers and people with disabilities can use to design a personalized evacuation plan.

NFPA has been a worldwide leader in providing fire, electrical, building, and life safety to the public since 1896. The mission of the international nonprofit organization is to reduce the worldwide burden of fire and other hazards on the quality of life by providing and advocating consensus codes and standards, research, training and education. Visit NFPA's Web site at www.nfpa.org.

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